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Effects of Clubs & Extra-Curricular Activities

Problem

When freshmen students first enter college, one of their first thoughts are "I want to get involved, but I am not sure what clubs I should join that would benefit me the most". To help freshman students decide on what clubs or extra-curricular activities would be best for them to join, I took interviews of current college freshmen just to see how and why they chose the clubs they are involved with now. Also in this paper, there is some background information collected from Rebekah Nathan's *My Freshman Year* (2005), Christina Baker's *Under-Represented College Students and Extracurricular Involvement: The Effects of Various Student Organizations on Academic Performance* (2007), and Lisa Kort-Butler and Kellie Hagewen's *The Effects of Various Student Organizations on Academic Performance* (2010) on the ways the students choose what clubs and organizations they want to join and the effects they have on the student's academic and social lives.¹ Through my interviews and observations, I have gathered information on the ways students decide on what clubs or extracurricular activities to join and why they chose them.

Background

In the first few days of college, just like at Bloomsburg, there is usually a big event where all of the clubs on campus come together and try to recruit as many freshman as possible into their club, sometimes known as "club fair". There are usually several different types of clubs on campus involved in the club fair ranging from religious organizations, political organizations, arts organizations, Greek letter organizations, to athletic organizations (Baker, 2007).² With so many different types of organizations to choose from, it makes it even harder for some freshmen to decide on which clubs would be most beneficial to their academic and social lives in college, or if they should even join any clubs at all because of their academic studies students have to keep up with.³

Based on the observations professional ethnographers collected, "extracurricular clubs and organizations were not a central focus of student activity", but for some people it was a way to "keep busy" (Nathan, 2005, p. 36). Other ethnographers noticed a common theme for people

to join these organizations: because they wanted to make friends who share similar beliefs and interests. Butler states that "there is a positive relationship between an adolescent's participation in structured extracurricular activities and well-being" which is why so many students want to join clubs (Butler & Hagewen, 2010, p. 1). In addition to the positive effects of clubs and extra-curricular activities, another reason why students join certain clubs is to help them with their future. When Nathan interviewed freshmen who joined clubs, most students "viewed clubs and community work with the same eye for career" (Nathan, 2005, p. 34). A lot of clubs offered on campus are connected to certain majors, helping a student receive more guidance and involvement with related professions.

The main effect student organized clubs and organizations had on its participants was an increase of the student's self-esteem (Butler & Hagewen, 2010). In Butler and Hagewen's studies, self-esteem was considered to mean: "you have many good qualities; you have a lot to be proud of; you like yourself just the way you are; and you feel you are doing things just about right". (Butler & Hagewen, 2010, p. 4) Butler and Hagewen's studies showed in conclusion that "those who participated in school-based extracurricular activities had higher initial levels of self-esteem compared to those who did not participate" (Butler & Hagewen, 2010, p. 9).²

Based on this previous research, I proposed questions that related to student participation and effect of that participation: After I read the background information on clubs and extracurricular activities, my next thought was: What about freshmen students who go to other colleges or universities? Are the reasons for joining and hopes of what they get out of it the same for them too?³

Method

My next step for me included interviewing freshmen entering their first year of college asking what clubs or organizations they joined, why they joined them, and the benefits they hope to get out of them. I asked two freshmen from two different universities the following questions: What clubs or extracurricular activities are you in? Why did you pick these clubs? How are these clubs connected to your major? And what benefits do hope to get from these choices?

Findings

When I asked both participants these questions, most answers were relatively the same. The boy who attends Johns Hopkins is a mechanical engineering major and is involved with an acapella group and BAJA (club where a group builds a buggy car and races it with other people

around the world). The reasons for he joined an acapella group were to make new friends who enjoyed to sing, just like he did in high school. He chose to join BAJA because it looks very good on a resume for mechanical engineering jobs and is almost a guarantee hire for anyone involved with the organization since it is a world-wide organization. He said that the acapella group did not really connect to his major, but BAJA connected very much to his major because it is one of the best mechanical engineering club to join at Johns Hopkins. But, for now, he just hopes to make new friends with the same interests as him and strengthen his knowledge of building different things and use the knowledge in his future work and studies. He joined these clubs were for personal and future professional reasons.

My next participant was a freshman girl who is a chemical engineering major and attends Miami University of Ohio. The organizations and clubs she is involved with are softball, tennis, juggling club, parkour (stunt and exercise club) and Engineering Missional Community (like an LLC at Bloomsburg). The main reasons she joined softball, tennis, juggling club and parkour are because she was involved with these same kind of athletics and interests in high school. Just like at Bloomsburg, she joined Engineering Missional Community to meet the other people in her major and upperclassmen who have already taken some of the classes she is taking now and who can help her with anything. The only club related to her major is Engineering Missional Community. When I asked her what she hopes to get of the clubs, her answer was just about the same as the boy's; she wanted to make new friends with same interests and who can help her with some of her homework. Engineering Missional Community is a similar club compared to BAJA because it will help with the girl's future career as a chemical engineer. Also like the boy interviewed, she wanted to stay involved with the same things she enjoyed in high school and stay busy, active, and in-shape.

Conclusion

Based on my interviews and observations with freshmen students, I can conclude that freshmen like to join clubs to make new friends with similar interests and use the information gained in these clubs for their studies in college and for the future where they find jobs in relating to their majors. The results found from my interviews were very similar to the results and observations of the ethnographers. Like Nathan's students at AnyU, I found that the people I interviewed said that they were not absolutely did not need to be in these clubs, but it was a good way to start freshmen year and meet new friends (Nathan, 2005). I cannot completely address the

ways the clubs affected the interviewees because it still has only been about a month since school started, but, I could only assume that the clubs would help their self-esteem (Butler & Hagewen, 2010). Hopefully by participating in clubs freshmen students attending any college choose, they will greatly benefit their self-esteem and really make them feel important and involved.

For myself, with the clubs have I already chose to join, I can see how they have affected and changed me. I find it very important for college freshmen to stay as much involved as possible through their college years.³

References

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